

definition of marriage. If that act is overturned by the courts, then marriage recognized in one city or State may have to be recognized as marriages everywhere else. That would mean that every State would have to recognize marriage as redefined by judges in, say, Massachusetts or local officials in San Francisco, no matter what their own State laws or their State constitutions say.

This national question requires a national solution. And on an issue of such profound importance, that solution should come not from the courts but from the people of the United States. An amendment to the Constitution is necessary because activist courts have left our Nation with no other choice. When judges insist on imposing their arbitrary will on the people, the only alternative left to the people is an amendment to the Constitution, the only law a court cannot overturn.

The constitutional amendment that the Senate will consider this week would fully protect marriage from being redefined. It will leave State legislatures free to make their own choices in defining legal arrangements other than marriage. A constitutional amendment is the most democratic process by which our country can resolve this issue. In their wisdom, our founders set a high bar for amending the Constitution. An amendment must be approved by two-thirds of the House and the Senate and then ratified by three-fourths of the 50 State legislatures. This process guarantees that every State legislature and every community in our Nation will have a voice and a say in deciding this issue.

A constitutional amendment would not take this issue away from the States, as some have argued. It would take the issue away from the courts and put it directly before the American people.

As this debate goes forward, every American deserves to be treated with tolerance and respect and dignity. On an issue of this great significance, opinions are strong and emotions run deep. And all of us have a duty to conduct this discussion with civility and decency toward one another. All people deserve to have their voices heard, and a constitutional amendment will ensure that they are heard.

I appreciate you taking an interest in this fundamental issue. It's an important issue for our country to debate and to resolve. And the best way to resolve this issue is through a constitutional amendment, which I strongly support. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:48 p.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

### **Proclamation 8028—Caribbean-American Heritage Month, 2006**

*June 5, 2006*

*By the President of the United States of America*

#### **A Proclamation**

During Caribbean-American Heritage Month, we celebrate the great contributions of Caribbean Americans to the fabric of our Nation, and we pay tribute to the common culture and bonds of friendship that unite the United States and the Caribbean countries.

Our Nation has thrived as a country of immigrants, and we are more vibrant and hopeful because of the talent, faith, and values of Caribbean Americans. For centuries, Caribbean Americans have enriched our society and added to the strength of America. They have been leaders in government, sports, entertainment, the arts, and many other fields.

During the month of June, we also honor the friendship between the United States and the Caribbean countries. We are united by our common values and shared history, and I join all Americans in celebrating the rich Caribbean heritage and the many ways in which Caribbean Americans have helped shape this Nation.

**Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush,** President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim June 2006 as Caribbean-American Heritage Month. I encourage all Americans to learn more about the history of Caribbean Americans and their contributions to our Nation.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this fifth day of June, in the year

of our Lord two thousand six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirtieth.

**George W. Bush**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 9:20 a.m., June 7, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on June 8.

**Remarks on Immigration Reform  
and a Swearing-In Ceremony for W.  
Ralph Basham as Commissioner of  
Customs and Border Protection in  
Artesia, New Mexico**

*June 6, 2006*

Thank you all. Please be seated. Pete, thanks for your kind words, and thanks for your leadership. New Mexico has got a fine senior Senator in Pete Domenici. All he talks about is New Mexico when I'm with him. Now I'm afraid all he's going to talk about is FLETC. [Laughter]

It's good to be in Artesia. Some people probably think I've never heard of Artesia. You forgot I grew up in Midland. Home of the Mighty Bulldogs, Artesia is. The land where the sky is big and the people are friendly. I knew I was in pretty good country when I saw all the cowboy hats, and I think I saw one guy spitting in a can. [Laughter] But I'm thrilled to be here, I really am, and I appreciate a chance to be here at the Border Patrol Academy, here at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center.

I want to—the reason I'm here is because I want the country to pay attention to what you're doing. And I want you to understand, those of you who are training to become Border Patrol agents and those of you who are training the trainees, I want you to understand that I really appreciate your contribution to the United States of America, and so do the American people.

What you're learning to do here is important. It's important for the security of our Nation. And I want to thank you for volunteering. At this academy, new agents undergo 19 weeks of training, and by the looks of it, it isn't all that easy. It's practical experience. It's the kind of experience that's going to put

you in pretty good stead when it comes to doing the job that we expect you to do.

You're taking courses in counterterrorism and immigration law. You're taking courses in antidrug trafficking and firearms. You're taking courses in motor vehicle operations. And for those of you who don't know how to speak Spanish, you're learning how to speak Spanish. Those are all very important parts of your training.

Look, I'm not here to give you a lecture, but I am here to thank you. I want to appreciate what you're doing; I appreciate your service. I look forward to seeing you out there on the border doing the job we expect you to do. And in a little while, I'm going to tell you, you expect something from us too. But the first thing you can expect is the full support of the Federal Government, and you have it.

I appreciate—[applause]—Pete Domenici is keeping pretty good company today with Senator Jeff Bingaman. It's good to see the Senator. Thanks for coming. I'm proud you're here as well. I flew down with two Members of the United States Congress, Congressman Tom Udall—he's from the northern part of the State—and Congressman Steve Pearce—he's here from the eastern part of New Mexico. It's good to see you all. Pearce has got that umbrella up because he's bald-headed. [Laughter] He's also a fine Congressman.

I want to thank the Governor of the great State of New Mexico, Governor Bill Richardson. Governor, I'm proud you're here. Thank you for taking the time. I know what it's like to be the Governor of a border State. And I know Governor Richardson counts on the Federal Government to pass a good piece of legislation that will enable him and the people of this State who are working with you to do their jobs. And I'm proud you're on the lead of comprehensive immigration reform, Bill.

I want to thank Secretary Mike Chertoff for joining us. I want to thank other members of my administration, starting with Ralph Basham, who is the Commissioner of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and his wife, Judy. We're fixing to swear Ralph in. Part of this ceremony is for you to witness the swearing-in of your boss. I think that's